A DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS TENSIONS
IN HORACE, SATIRES 2.7

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The opening of the poem anticipates the direction which the satire is to take:

1-2 iamdudum ausculto et cupiens tibi dicere servus
paucha reformido.

This reference, which Davus makes to his own status as a slave, apart from identifying immediately his relationship with the poet and, thereby, setting a standard of expected behaviour for their interaction, anticipates especially his later statement of the Stoic paradox that only the sapiens is truly free.1 Davus finds encouragement in the Stoic belief that all men are equally slaves, apart from the exceptional sapiens. This belief, coupled with the freedom traditionally granted by the Saturnalia, prompts Davus to repay Horace for some of the verbal punishment which he has had to endure throughout his lifetime as a slave. This follows the possible interpretation of iamdum ausculto (1), which is offered by Palmer as an alternative to the interpretation, which he actually prefers, that Davus had been listening to Horace scolding some other slaves, and which is, itself, the third of a series of possible explanations.2 Palmer, in support of the contention that Davus wishes to pay Horace back for previous scoldings, which he has himself endured, refers to Juvenal 1.1: ‘semper ego auditor tantum, numquamne reponam?’ On balance this is also the interpretation which I would support; the idea of the slave interrupting the private, but spoken, musings of his master, possibly self-critical musings, is also attractive, especially in the light of the attack which Davus is himself about to launch against his master. For Horace portrays Davus as being motivated by a genuine concern for his master, a concern which suits a slave who claims to be ‘amicum/mancipium domino et frugi quod sit satis. . .’ (2-3). Davus’ attitude and self-praise is reminiscent of the behaviour of the loyal slave in Roman comedy.3 Horace, intrigued by this interruption, allows the slave to have his say:

4-5 age, libertate Decembri,
quando ita maiores voluerunt, utere; narra.

2. A. Palmer, n. ad loc. The Satires of Horace (London, 1888): the alternatives listed by Palmer are as follows, (a) while Horace was reciting the last satire, (b) while Horace was otherwise reading aloud or talking to himself, (c) while Horace was scolding some slave, (d) Davus was listening at the door for his master’s command, (e) Davus was listening until Horace awoke from sleep, and (f) Davus was listening until Horace rose from his ‘lectus lucubratorius’.
3. For a discussion of the loyalty of the Plautine and Terentian slave, see G. Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy (Princeton, 1952), pp.251-253. Phaniscus in Plautus, Most. 859 displays a timidity similar to that of Davus; he also comments that such timidity is the mark of a useful and devoted slave.
Horace suggests that it is the freedom which is granted by the Saturnalia which allows Davus to talk to Horace as an equal. On the other hand, one could also suggest that the initial tolerance, which Horace extends towards Davus, was fostered by that spirit of ‘Stoic’ humanism which is reflected in the treatment and portrayal of slaves and prostitutes in the comedies of Menander and Terence. Horace, however, who was an admirer of the *mores maiorum* when it suited his purpose, acquiesces in the liberality of the Saturnalia, since it had been willed by the ancestors, ‘ita maiores voluerunt’ (5). Horace reverts to Catonic harshness only when his patience has been severely tested:

117-118

\[\text{ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino.}\]

Horace had other and more personal reasons for treating slaves with a degree of compassion and humanity, since he was himself the son of a freedman, was not afraid to publish the fact and had praised Maecenas for not holding his origins against him. In this sense, therefore, Horace would have had some basic sympathy for the idea that slave and free were essentially the same.

Initially Davus takes his opportunity with diffidence; he is unwilling to become too personal too quickly. He makes a general statement to test his master’s reaction.

Davus praises consistency by attacking its opposite in a manner which is reminiscent of Horace’s earlier treatment of the theme in *Satires* 1.3; Davus ultimately declares that a life of consistent debauch in the same vice is preferable to a life which swings from one type of vice to another; or, which swings from one extreme of virtue to the other of vice, whichever is the meaning of:

18-20

\[\text{quanto constantior isdem,}
\in vitiis, tanto levius miser ac prior illo,
qui iam contento, iam laxo fune laborat.}\]

Horace knew that no true Stoic could subscribe to such a view, by making a virtue out of a vice, and, by the attribution of such a view to Davus, he both undercuts the authority of Davus as a serious moralist, in advance of that moral attack, which Horace is about to arrange that Davus should launch against him, and he also demonstrates that the fresh convert is not the safest mouthpiece for

4. The Stoics rejected the Platonic and Aristotelian concept of the natural slave; e.g. Philo, *Sept. et Fest. Di.* p.283 Μ, ἀνθρωπος γὰρ ἐκ φύσεως δοῦλος ὀδηγεῖ. However, the economic realities of the ancient world ensured that the Stoics urged the amelioration of the lot of the slave, rather than the abandonment of the system. For legislation regarding slavery and the influence of Stoicism on such legislation, see E.V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism* (London, 1911) pp.402-403. Cicero and Seneca were in the forefront of those who urged that slaves deserved more humane treatment: e.g. Cic. *Rep.* 3.25.37 and *Off.* 1.13.41; Sen. *Ep.* 47.1-2 and *Ben.* 3.18.2; 3.22.1 and 3.22.3.

5. E.g. Horace, *Satires* 1.6.45-48, where the repetition of ‘libertino patre natum’ indicates both bitterness and a certain insecurity regarding the basis of his position within the circle of Octavian and Maecenas.
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a philosophical system. Horace also demonstrates, as the satire develops, that an ‘educated’ slave can learn of concepts and theories which are capable of seriously undermining the stability of the established social and economic system, however laudable those concepts may be from a purely philosophical or humanitarian point of view.

On a matter of detail, however, it is interesting to note a possible example of Horatian wit in v.20. The line in question runs as follows:

20 qui iam contento, iam laxo fune laborat.

The origin of the proverb is unclear. The idea seems to be that a man who is being towed, as a slave or prisoner, which is a concept which is compatible with the continuing context of the satire, would suffer a degree of discomfort (laborat) from being towed too severely with a tight rope and/or alternately from becoming entangled in too loose a rope. However, this does seem to be a rather obscure illustration of the basic concept that extremes are to be avoided and that consistency is desirable, unless there is some added point, which appears to have been overlooked. A clue lies in the concept of tension, upon which the image of the rope depends.

‘Tension’ had played an important role in both physical and ethical theories since the time of Heraclitus. The idea that the soul is a kind of tension or harmony is explored by Plato in the Phaedo. However, it is in the philosophy of the Stoics that the concept of ‘tension’ or τόνος assumed its greatest importance in both the fields of ethics and physics, as was natural in a non-atomic materialistic philosophy based upon a ‘continuum’ theory of space and time, in which τόνος was the material expression of the all-pervading role and purpose of the divine logos. Even as the τόνος, which is present in that πνεῦμα, which interpenetrates those bodies, considered by the layman to be ‘inanimate’, is responsible for the maintenance of those bodies in a relatively stable existence, even so the τόνος, which is maintained within the more sophisticated human organism by the human individual’s share of πνεῦμα, or his soul, and which also exists within the soul, is responsible for the maintenance

6. One should compare the uncomplimentary characterisation of Ofellus at the beginning of Satires 2.2 and of Damasippus in Satires 2.3.

7. E.g. Heraclitus, fr. 51 (Hipp. Ref. 9.9.1), ὃς ἐνυάσων ὄκως διαφερόμενον ἐωτῷ ἐξομφέρεται· παλύτωνος ἀμοινή ὄκωσερ τόξον καὶ λύρης. I accept the reading παλίντονος, as supported by Kirk and Raven, The Presocratic Philosophers (Cambridge, 1962) pp.193f., against παλάττονος, supported by Vlastos, AJP 76 (1955) 348ff., although, even if one were to accept Vlastos’ reading, one would have to accept the existence of τόνος within the bow or lyre.

8. At Plato, Phaedo 91c-95c the epiphenomenalist view that the soul is a harmony sprung from the tension between the material constituents of the body is dismissed by Socrates.


10. See Plutarch, De Virt. Mor. 451B; cf. Sextus Emp. 9.81.
of a man's physical being, his capacity for locomotion and also for the moral state of his soul and intellect — and for the efficiency of the latter. The physical health and mental health of an individual were maintained by an analogous process dependent upon the \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \) within the \( \pi \nu \epsilon \upsilon \mu \alpha \). The relationship between \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \) in physics and \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \) in ethics is summed up by Arnold as follows:

The theory of 'tension' has an immediate application to ethics. When the soul has sufficient tension to perform its proper work, it operates according to the virtues of Wisdom, Justice, Courage and Soberness; but when the tension is relaxed, the soul becomes disordered and is seized upon by the emotions.13

I would suggest that the extremes of behaviour to which Horace makes reference in his exploitation of the proverb of the rope can be understood more clearly, if the reader bears in mind that contento is a veiled reference to the \( \epsilon \delta \rho \omicron \omicron \nu \alpha \) of a virtuous Stoic soul and that laxo is a reference to the immoral soul which is lacking the requisite \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \).14 This interpretation is made more likely by the emphasis which is placed upon another aspect of \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \), as intentio, in the moral sense of 'intention' in vv.72-74.

There is also a typically Horatian and witty exploitation of the concept of 'tension' by Horace in vv.47-48:

\[ \text{acris ubi me} \]
\[ \text{natura intendit...} \]

where the notion of sexual tension, both physical and psychological, is employed and is coupled with a domineering \( \text{natura} \), according to the dictates of which the good Stoic should organise his whole life!15

Horace characterises Davus' inaccurate description of Stoic doctrine by the epithet putida in v.21:

\[ \text{non dices hodie quorsum haec tam putida tendant,} \]
\[ \text{furcifer?} \]

When applied to argumentation or literature the adjective putidus carries the meaning of 'unnatural', 'disagreeable', or 'affected'.16 More importantly, by apostrophising Davus as furcifer in v.22, Horace attributes to Davus, by


12. 'Cleanthes ambulationem ait spiritum esse a principali usque in pedes permissum', Seneca, Ep. 113.23.

13. Arnold, p.89.

14. Contento need not be a reference to healthy tension for the witticism to have point. Differences of behaviour, even of an uniformly evil cast, could be explained by differences in the soul's \( \tau \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \zeta \) at the times decisions to act were made.

15. It is important to note also that in Stoic writings \( \text{natura} \) is not only the divine law, in accordance with which one should live, as at, e.g. Cicero, Fin. 14.14, but also the individual nature of people as e.g. at Cicero, Off. 1.110, 'neque enim attinet naturae (sc. nostrae) repugnare nec quicquam sequi, quod assequi non questas.'

16. E.g. Cicero, Off. 1.133.
association, the more unseemly characteristics of the comic slave, taking up and rejecting the self-praise of 'amicum/mancipium domino et frugi...' in vv.2-3; *furcifer* is a common term of servile abuse in Roman Comedy. By employing this term Horace warns us against taking statements made in this particular poem any more seriously than we would those made by slaves in a comedy of Plautus or Terence. It is by now clear enough to the reader 'quorsum haec tam putida tendant'. The ostensible *exempla*, Priscus and Volanerius, are obscure figures. It is clear, however, in the light of the accusations which Davus aims at Horace regarding his sexuality in vv.46-71, that the poet is the implied object of criticism in:

13-14 iam moechus Romae, iam mallet doctus Athenis vivere...

Horace had studied philosophy at Athens and felt the demands of sex as much as the next man. Horace's suspicions regarding the direction in which the satire is leading are confirmed by the 'ad te, inquam' of v.22.

Horace pays only lip-service to the traditional ways. A twist is given here by Davus to the treatment of *μεμψψοφία* with which Horace chose to open his first satire:

18-27 laudas
fortunam et mores antiquae plebis, et idem
si quis ad illa deus subito te agat, usque recuses,
aut quia non sentis quod clamas rectius esse,
aut quia non firmus rectum defendis et haeres
neiquam caeno cupiens evellere plantam.

Either Horace's praises of the *mores maiorum*, the appearance of which has been prepared for by v.5, are insincere and hypocritical, or Horace has not the strength of character which was required to fit one for the old ways. The terminology which Davus employs shows that the neophyte can use Stoic jargon, even if he does not fully understand it. For *rectius* of v.25 and *non firmus rectum* of v.26 are consciously employed Stoic terms, anticipated again by *recta* in v.7. The terminology of this whole passage is certainly sufficient to show that the attack has some basis in Stoic theory; in what ways, however, does Davus believe that his master falls short of the Stoic ideal, apart from his obvious *μεμψψοφία*? An aspect of this flaw is the fact that, when at Rome, Horace wants to be in the country and to enjoy freedom from business, although the Stoics demanded an active virtue, as did the *mores maiorum*. The Stoics also

17. E.g. Horace, *Sat.* 1.5.82-85.
19. On the Stoic connotations of *rectum*, see e.g. Cicero, *Nat. Deo.* 1.36; for Stoic uses of *stabilis*, see e.g. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.45 and *Tusc.* 4.53.
21. False motivation, especially in the field of political ambition, was a target for attack in *Sat.* 2.3; however, Davus cannot accuse Horace of such a failing which is not compatible with non-involvement in politics. The motives behind that non-involvement should perhaps
demanded a constant surveillance of self and one’s motives, and a certain asceticism. It may be mistaken of Davus to accuse Horace of hypocrisy in respect of such matters, if Horace had never been a confessed Stoic. It is legitimate, however, to attack Horace on those points where he falls short of the behaviour to be expected of an occasional and limited devotee of the *mores maiorum*, especially his unwillingness to marry, which is relevant to Davus’ attack in vv.46-74, and his aversion to political involvement in affairs of state.

The beautifully observed description of Horace’s eagerness to drink and dine with Maecenas, despite his protestations of vv.29-32, comes very naturally from one of the slaves thrown into urgent action by Horace’s demands. The placing of these comments into the mouth of a slave allows Horace to compare naturally the relative merits and situations of the free and of the slave in the light of Stoic views on the unique freedom of the *sapiens*. It may be seen that Horace achieves a marked degree of dramatic effect by the contrast and consequent tension between himself and his interlocutor in station, character and intellect. Horace also achieves by the vividness of his technique a degree of verisimilitude for the action and setting of his miniature drama. The danger of monotony, a potential danger in direct moralising, is also thereby avoided. In addition Horace demonstrates in practice here those links which he has declared elsewhere to exist between satire and comedy in *Sat.* 1.4 and 1.10.

Davus now concentrates on the ‘superiority’ of Horace to Davus himself and Horace’s other slaves and parasites; he declares that it is merely a matter of convention; that Horace is a hypocrite to attack the flaws of others and yet wrap up his own vices in polite euphemisms.

For example, Davus takes his pleasure with an honest whore, but Horace hankers after an adulterous and, therefore, extremely dangerous relationship. The precise nature of the dangers are described by Davus in vivid and in humiliating detail at vv.56-61. Voluntarily to subject oneself to such dangers in the search for sensual pleasure runs counter to the basic ethical instinct of the Stoics, that of the preservation of self. Horace reacts quite violently to these criticisms with ‘non sum moechus’ (70). Rather, these words are placed in the mouth of Davus as an anticipation of Horace’s protestations of innocence. This is the ‘straw man’ technique of diatribe, while the interruption introduces with great neatness the concept of ‘intention’ in questions of crime and guilt. Despite

be questioned. The ultimate criterion is whether one’s motives are satisfactorily explicable to oneself. See, Seneca, *Dial.* 5.41.2.

22. For a discussion of Stoic asceticism, see Arnold, pp.258f.

23. Horace notes these links especially in the literary poems, e.g. *Sat.* 1.4 and 1.10, also 2.1; note also, however, *Sat.* 2.3.11-12.

24. Note also, in vv.56-61, that the tension between lust and fear is used to characterise Horace’s supposed state of mind, ‘metuens induceris atque / altercante libidinibus tremis ossa pavore’, vv.56-57.

the incongruity of the comic setting and the untrustworthiness of the fictional source, the doorman of Crispinus, Davus describes the Stoic doctrine of *intentio* with some accuracy.

This discussion is introduced by an illustration which is in keeping with Davus' position as a trusted slave. The illustration, by emphasising his position as a slave, also anticipates the statement of the paradox that only the *sapiens* is free, which will occupy a good proportion of this section of the poem. The initial reference to the doctrine of intention is at vv.72-74:

> 'non sum moechus' ais. neque ego, hercule, fur ubi vasa praetereo sapiens argentea. toll periculum, iam vaga prosiliet frenis natura remoti.

Compare Arnold's statement of the belief on p.286 of *Roman Stoicism*; 'Virtue is a state of mind, a disposition of the soul; it is not an act. Hence the bent of the mind (*inclinatio*), its aim (*intentio*), its desire (*βούλησις, voluntas*) is everything; the performance through the organs of the body is nothing.' Cicero puts it well at *De Finibus* 3.9.32:

> sic timere, sic maerere, sic in libido esse peccatum est, etiam sine effectu.

Now it may appear strange that Horace allows Davus to misconstrue Stoic doctrine in vv.18-20, but puts on accurate representation of the doctrine of intention into his mouth a mere fifty lines later in the same poem. One possible conclusion is that Horace wished initially to detract from the authority of Davus as a critic so that, even when he does speak accurately and with good sense, the power of his criticism is somewhat wanting in effectiveness. A more important consideration is that Horace allows Davus to overstate the case in vv.1-20 in order to exploit the play on the word *contento*, attention to which has already been drawn. For the verbal play with the concept of *τόνος* helps to unify the structure of the satire by anticipating this exposition of *intentio* in vv.72-74, and incidentally *intendit* in v.48. This is made even more certain by Horace's choice of metaphor in vv.73-74:

> toll periculum, iam vaga prosiliet frenis natura remotis.

Remove the tight reins by means of which man's animal tendencies are governed and, given free rein, those tendencies take over and run wild. The *frenis remotis* of v.74 is closely parallel to the *laxo fune* of v.20.27

The word *sapiens* in v.73 also has a special significance. On the one hand *sapiens* here anticipates the description of the Stoic *sapiens* in vv.83-88. The comparison of the 'free' Horace, who is 'enslaved' to his inclinations, and so less

26. See the comments on individual Stoic *natura* in n.15.
27. The idea of tension is also clearly present in the image drawn from puppet manipulation in vv.80-82:

```latex
nempe
\begin{verbatim}
tu mihi qui imperitas alii servis miser atque duceris ut nervis alienis mobile lignum.
\end{verbatim}
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free than the ‘slave’ Davus, enables Davus to move on easily, in v.83, to the question, ‘quisnam igitur liber?’ The answer ‘sapiens sibi qui...’ follows naturally. But the use of *sapiens* in v.73 is not only for the purpose of easing the transition to the discussion of the Stoic *sapiens* by the technique of *praemunitio*. For, although Horace allows Davus to make a point, which is valid from a Stoic viewpoint, namely that Horace is guilty of adultery, because of his *intentio* or *voluntas*, Horace’s wit reduces the effectiveness of that point. The immediate connotation which a reader would place upon *sapiens* by the time he had reached v.73 is that it is the epithet as normally applied to the Stoic sage. However, all that Davus wishes to say is that because he was aware of the risk of apprehension and punishment, because, that is, he was *sapiens* (aware), he passed by the chance of stealing the silverware. Davus admits, therefore, that he is as guilty of theft as Horace is of adultery; on the other hand, Davus’ claim is that he is superior to his master, since he admits this guilt to himself. The reader is amused by Davus describing himself as *sapiens*, if only because he is aware of the picture of the true and technical Stoic *sapiens* which is painted, for example, by Cicero at *De Finibus* 3.22.75:

> quam gravis vero, quam magnifica, quam constans conficitur persona sapientis!

where we note the emphasis on the *constantia* of the *sapiens*.

Horace is exploiting the particularly Plautine/Comic technique of incongruity by means of which the authority or dignity of a serious statement or description is made to appear ludicrous, because both of the circumstances which surround them and also because of the established and ludicrous character of the speaker.\(^{28}\)

Accordingly, although the description of the unique freedom of the true Stoic *sapiens* which follows in vv.83-88 may well be described by Rudd as ‘the noble description of the truly free man’;\(^{29}\) its effect is somewhat tarnished by the setting into which Horace places this pearl of wisdom. There is nothing inherently ridiculous in Davus’ exposition of the freedom of the *sapiens*;\(^{30}\) any more than the exposition of the theory of intention was ridiculous; it is the context of these expositions and the character of the person who produces them, which help to achieve the satiric and comic effect.

Davus now places an ever increasing emphasis upon Horace’s lack of genuine

\(^{28}\) Part of the point of Horace’s witticism is that the more serious of the Stoic writers openly admitted the infrequency with which men achieved the status of *sapientes*, e.g. ‘ubi enim istum invenies, quem tot saeculis quaerimus?’ Seneca, *Tran. An.* 7.4. The accolade was normally granted only when the recipients, being safely dead, as in the cases of Herakles and Cato Maior, were incapable of blotting their record!


\(^{30}\) It may, however, be thought that the description, ‘ut in se ipse totus, teres, atque rotundus, / externi ne quid valeat per leve morari, / in quem manca ruit semper fortuna’ takes the metaphor to unnecessarily amusing lengths. The *sapiens* is almost made to sound like a physical manifestation of the Parmenidean ‘One’.
freedom. By the question:

88-89 potesne
ex his ut proprium quid noscere?

Davus suggests that Horace’s case is, in fact, quite hopeless and this is further made clear by the following comments:

92-94 ‘liber, liber sum’ dic age. non quis;
urget enim dominus mentem non lenis et acris
subiectat lasso stimulos versatque negantem.

Apart from the fact that we note that the concept of τόνος is brought to the fore again in lasso of v.94, it is evident also that the technique of incongruity is present. For the sentiments which are expressed in these three lines call to mind inescapably that ‘savage master’ from which Sophocles was, according to Cephalus in Plato, Republic so pleased to escape.31 The story would also have been familiar to readers without Greek from Cicero’s adaptation of it in the De Senectute 47. The idea that Davus should echo such a one as Sophocles or, more particularly, Cato Maior, when one considers the attitude of that gentleman to slaves, is so irresistibly amusing that it inevitably detracts from the impact which his words of criticism can make.

The case which Davus is making against Horace loses considerably more of its force in the examples which follow, and which finally provoke Horace into responding with threats of violent punishment. For, although Horace cannot properly deny that he does feel the effect of those appetites which, with soul, are common to all men, and that he is, if one accepts the logic and terminology of the Stoics, the slave of these appetites, he can nevertheless deny most strenuously that Davus is his equal in all other respects too, especially those which demand a particular skill or capacity. The provocative fallacy in the case which is laid against Horace by Davus is that shared humanity or equal humanity, although involving shared mortality, also involves equality in any particular skill or capacity. In matters of aesthetics and artistic appreciation it may be true, arguably, in Protagorean terms, that each man’s perceptions or interpretations are true for himself; however, it is not, or should not be, true that the layman’s interpretation should also hold good for others, unless the layman can ‘give an account’, to borrow a phrase from the Theaetetus, of his interpretation, an account which is acceptable to men who have established a reputation among critics and practitioners.32 This is a mistake which Horace apparently saw as characteristic of the enthusiastic Stoic neophyte who, when carried away by the validity of one portion of his system, was eager to apply the whole of the system to the entire spectrum of human behaviour. Such enthusiasm for a doctrine which, if properly directed, could become an effective weapon of persuasion in the hands of a writer of satire, becomes, in fact, counter-productive by making both itself and its adherents appear ridiculous.

31. Plato, Rep. 329b-c, the ἄγριον διεσπότην.
32. Plato, Theaet. 201c-d.
One should also note that in v.97, only a little over twenty lines from the close of the poem, Horace takes the opportunity to use *contento* again, only a short interval after *lasso* in v.94. Both of the words echo the *contento* and *laxo* of the troublesome v.20. It may be that Horace is suggesting, with tongue thrust firmly into cheek, that the Stoic neophyte naturally enjoys a painting in which the action of the fiery *pneuma* is so evident. I understand *contento poplite* here as applying to the straining limbs of the painted gladiators: this is in agreement with Palmer and against Rudd’s rather prosaic ‘with legs rooted / to the spot’, which applies to the figure of Davus, who is standing, apparently transfixed with awe, before the painted scene. The underlying notion of the τόνος of limbs, which are fiercely involved in battle, seems more appropriate than the static τόνος of Davus as spectator.

The attack, which Davus makes in vv.102-111 on the expensive eating habits of Horace, suffers from a similar flaw. Davus suggests that Horace enjoys food, only if it is expensive and difficult to obtain, even as the equally unfounded suggestion was made that Horace’s sexual appetite was also only whetted by the prospect of adulterous and therefore dangerous conquests. Regarding sexual satisfaction, Horace had shown in *Satires* 1.2 that he disapproved of the dangers of adultery, while, regarding gluttony and the alleged appetite for expensive and exotic foods, there is more than enough to suggest in *Satires* 2.2; 2.6 and 2.8 that this attack too is unfounded. If Davus’ attack is true then Horace must be accusing himself of hypocrisy, which seems unlikely. If we can acquit Horace of the charge of hypocrisy (which I think we must), we may assume that Horace then is utilising Davus to attack *luxuria* from a perspective which is different from that employed in *Satires* 2.2; 2.6 and 2.8, and which is more akin to the kind of attack made upon *luxuria* in the Stoicising *Satires* 2.3. Also, even as Damasippus was himself a target for Horace’s wit in *Satires* 2.3, Davus is exposed in *Satires* 2.7 as a man whose moral strictures are lacking in discrimination. His are the uncritical moral strictures made by a man whose philosophy has blinded him to those skills and discriminatory powers which spring from experience and environment. This is a particularly serious flaw in the character of a ‘would be’ Stoic, since in Stoic ethics importance is attached to the role of knowledge, choice and experience. Horace seems to be asserting that, although he is not himself a Stoic, he knows enough of genuine Stoicism to recognise the shortcomings in the effusions of such ill-informed ‘Stoics’ as Davus; he also recognises the critical value of the condemnation of worldly vices by genuine Stoics.

The final and most provocative attack made by Davus is worth serious attention. Not only does it trigger Horace’s outburst with which the poem closes, but also, in vv.111-115, Horace allows Davus to employ such serious and

33. An alternative explanation is that Davus is straining on tip-toe to see over or past a crowd. This has a certain attraction, but there is no other indication that a crowd is present.

34. See, Cicero *Off.* passim; also Seneca, *Ep.* 75.
powerful imagery that the lines leave an indelible mark upon the reader’s mind as he lays the poem to one side. The lines in question run as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
111-115 & \quad \text{adde quod idem} \\
 & \quad \text{non horam tecum esse potes, non otia recte}^{35} \\
 & \quad \text{ponere teque ipsum vitas fugitivus et erro,} \\
 & \quad \text{iam vino quaerens, iam somno fallere curam:} \\
 & \quad \text{frustra; nam comes atra premit sequiturque fugacem.}
\end{align*}
\]

Whereas earlier the mention of ‘intention’ and the picture of the \textit{sapiens} were undermined by their setting, the pessimism of this picture is not. Although it may be true that the attacks upon Horace’s aesthetics and upon the alleged \textit{luxuria} which preceded it are fallacious and even facile, they tend, therefore, to throw into more sombre contrast this more general and veracious attack upon the human predicament. Also the fact that nothing follows, apart from the brief altercation between Horace and Davus, which itself ends on a harsh note, does little to diminish the sombre tone of the lines.

Even though \textit{Satires} 2.7 is pervaded by a certain comic aura or spirit, nevertheless, it seems that the message of vv. 111-115 is intended to be taken seriously. (This is not to suggest that there is any inherent incompatibility between the spirit of comedy and a serious or didactic intention) It is not, therefore, a question of over-dignifying these lines, if one considers that, despite the comic mouthpiece, they are a serious expression of Horace’s own views.\textsuperscript{36} It seems that Horace, when in a pessimistic frame of mind (and this may be the implication of the opening of this poem) was dissatisfied with his own condition, which he considered to be symptomatic of the human condition at large. Corroboration for this idea is to be found in \textit{Satires} 2.6 and in \textit{Odes} 3.1, one of the poet’s most consciously dignified and serious works, where the theme of \textit{Satires} 2.7.111-115 reappears and is further developed. Horace also on such occasions is accustomed to use himself as a guilty example — in order to take some of the sting out of his attacks.

It is interesting to note that Davus’ final criticism would have come with equal conviction from an Epicurean: anxiety for one’s position increases with the importance of the position which one has achieved; anxiety for one’s wealth in proportion to the increases in the wealth which one has amassed. Horace agrees with the Stoics (and the Epicureans) that an unceasing and falsely motivated quest for social superiority can only lead to dissatisfaction and anxiety, especially when such superiority is based upon the possession and display of wealth. Death, which can be described as \textit{comes atra}, and which is a 35. Cf. comments on \textit{recte} in n.19 above.

\textsuperscript{36} Part of the effectiveness of Horatian satire is, of course, that the humour of Horace is an exceedingly elusive butterfly, difficult to pin down and dissect. This factor induces a salutary unease in the reader comparable to the unease one may feel because of a sneaking respect, for example, for Iago or a certain sympathy for Trimalchio. The subtlety of the writing elicits consciously a subtle and troubling response. This in answer to those who would wish to dogmatise and categorise the unique humour of Horace.
portion of that *cura*, or a cause of it, which occurs in v.114, must also be an object of greater fear to those who feel that they have much to lose in terms of material possessions and worldly status; by contrast the poor can even look forward to death as a release.\(^{37}\) That Horace is being deadly serious in his comments at this stage is evident from the startling impact of the phrase *comes atra* (115): the use of *comes* in a figurative sense is well established in philosophical verse by Lucretius and the connotations of the word in the *De rerum natura* seem inevitably to be sombre.\(^{38}\) In fact, the idea of death and the fears that beset mortality seem inseparable from the figurative use of *comes* in the *De rerum natura*. It is in keeping with Lucretius' purpose as a purveyor of Epicureanism to stress this factor in his poem, since Epicureans held that the idea of death was inevitably, but needlessly, accompanied in the minds of the uninitiated with concern for or fear of what would ensue after death. This anxiety is always present and cannot be assuaged by wine, nor does sleep, in which dreams may come, provide any temporary respite. At Lucr. 3.1046-1052 we find, in fact, a juxtaposition of sleep and drink with *curis* that seems to anticipate Horace's *vino . . . somno* in *Satires* 2.7.114 and the similar *vini somnique benignus* of 2.3.3.

It was in accord with the spirit of Davus' final criticisms in this poem that Horace had depicted himself in *Satires* 2.6 as praying for a modest sufficiency of material comfort. The farm there described as being well away from the turmoil of Roman urban life symbolised an ideal which was neither Stoic nor Epicurean; it was an Italian ideal which, although it was capable of being lent support by the tenants of the Hellenistic schools, was quite independent of them in origin.\(^{39}\)

However that may be, the spell woven by *comes atra* is broken by the rumbustious final lines where Horace demonstrates that in the real world fact is more important than theory by threatening to exercise his rights as the actual master of Davus:

116-118 unde mihi lapidem? 'quorsum est opus?' unde sagittas?
'aut insanit homo aut versus facit.' ocius hinc te
ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino.

Horace makes explicit the mute threats of vv.43-44 and Davus' status as a slave, according to the definitions of the Roman world, is made emphatically clear; what is more the weak joke of Davus in v.117, although it has a certain ironic ambiguity, establishes Davus once again not only as a slave, but as a comic slave.\(^{40}\) The inversion of roles of master and slave which had been sanctioned by the Saturnalia is now over.

37. This was a recurring theme in New and Middle Comedy, e.g. Diphilus, fr. at Edmonds, 3a p.141.88.
39. One could say that it was a Mediterranean ideal, especially when one thinks of Vergil's farmer at *Georgics* 4.116-148.
40. Cf. the jokes made by Tranio at Plautus, *Most.* 1149-1152, which are made to Theoropides, although, or perhaps because, Tranio's machinations have been discovered.
Also, although the ending of the poem is abrupt, it is necessary that this interview should have come to a sharp close, when the ‘tension’, to borrow a Stoic term, which Horace depicts increasing within him, finally reaches breaking point and his temper gives way. The final expostulation of Davus is consciously reminiscent of Damasippus’ misguided attacks upon the alleged literary desidia of Horace in Satires 2.3. For Davus’ comment, ‘aut insanit homo aut versus facit...’ in v.117 is Horace’s final jibe at the Stoics, or, at least, at such Stoics as Damasippus and Davus. Davus identifies the composition of poetry with a symptom of insanity. On the other hand, Damasippus in Satires 2.3 had criticised Horace for not writing anything worthy of his muse. He had gone on to declare that Horace, along with all other men except the sapiens, was insane and had concluded with the statement that Horace’s poems were conclusive proof of his insanity. This was a line of thought which Horace suggested did not bear close examination. Such false argumentation and inconsistency is called to mind by Horace in v.117 of this poem, where Davus too is shown as being unsympathetic towards his master’s art. A major irony is that it would appear that Horace agreed that a degree of insanity was an essential element of the poet’s character. This is evident from the only partially humorous close of Horace’s Ars Poetica (vv.453-476). Considering the treatment received at the hands of ‘philosophers’ by Horace, it is especially interesting that the most patently insane poet of all, according to tradition, was the pre-Socratic philosopher poet Empedocles:

\[ \text{deus immortalis haberi} \\
\text{dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam} \\
\text{insiluit. sit ius liceatque perire poetis.} \]

Horace, A.P. 464-466

That Horace was well aware of Empedocles’ philosophical pretensions is intimated in typically Horatian manner: ardentem and frigidus imply two of the primary opposites which were among the Empedoclean elements of earth, air, fire and water!

To return to the close of Satires 2.7: after the sombre tones of vv.114-115, the tone of the poem’s ending is considerably lightened. However, a further harsh element does obtrude, which is consistent with the darker aspect of Roman comic humour. Although Horace relates the close of the satire to that same spirit of comedy which, in different guises, has permeated the whole, the threats which he utters as master are uncomfortably redolent of the realities of the slave’s lot. Particularly, Horace’s words ‘ocius hinc te / ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino’ (117-118) are reminiscent of Cato Maior’s advice concerning slaves. Perhaps, indeed, from our point of view the final irony of this most ironical satire is that, although Cato was posthumously declared a

41. Horace, Sat. 2.3.1-16.
42. Cato, De Re Rustica 2.7.
sapiens, his advice regarding slaves and his attitudes towards women were almost totally unaffected by that spirit of humanitas which was one of the more positive contributions of the Stoa in the general field of ethics.

This leads to my final comment upon this poem: despite the irony with which Horace treats the figures of Davus and those of similar persuasion, some of what they say seems to recommend itself to Horace as being worthy of serious attention. As may be seen from Satires 2.2 and, possibly, 2.6, a totally reactionary desire to return to the way of life of Cato Maior and his generation, as Horace and his contemporaries understood it, was in my view as unrealistic as it was ultimately undesirable. However, Horace, I believe, saw some prospect, at the time of the composition of the Satires, of combining the best of what the Hellenistic schools had to offer, purged with the wit demonstrated in Satires 2.3 and 2.7, with what was worth retaining in the mores maiorum. Something of this combination may be found I believe, in Satires 2.2 and 2.6 and, later, in the Epistles. To give Cicero the last word, I must admit that he recognised that one of the values of philosophy lay in this direction:

Quaeque sunt vetera praecepta sapientium, qui iubent 'tempori parere' et 'sequi deum' et 'nihil nimis', haec sine physicis quam vim habeant (et habent maximam) videre nemo potest. atque etiam ad iustitiam colendam, ad tuendas amicitias et reliquas caritates quid natura valeat haec una cognitio potest tradere; nec vero pietas adversus deos nec quanta iis gratia debeatur sine explicatione naturae intellegi potest.

Cicero, Fin. 3.22.73

And no one without Natural Philosophy can discern the value (and their value is very great) of the ancient maxims and precepts of the Wise Man, such as to 'obey occasion', 'follow God', 'know thyself', and 'moderation in all things'. Also this science alone can impart a conception of the power of nature in fostering justice and maintaining friendship and the rest of the affections; nor again without unfolding nature's secrets can we understand the sentiment of piety towards the gods or the degree of gratitude we owe them.

(Trans. Rackham)